

Start early for promotions

Preparation for promotion is an everyday task. The process is affected by how NCOs conduct themselves as a Soldier; how well they do their jobs; how they approach problems and challenges; how they interact with superiors, peers and subordinates; and how they seek self improvement.

Soldiers should work on preparing for promotion two grades up, for example, a private first class should be doing the things needed to be ready for the sergeant board. Continually work on areas like military and civilian education, improving Army Physical Fitness Test score, and improving basic rifle marksmanship scores. Soldiers should start seeking the tough jobs early in their career and keep doing it. Waiting until the right time or the last minute before a board will be too late.

Soldiers need to work on education from the day they come in the Army. This is important no matter what their career plans are. Taking Army correspondence courses and enrolling in college courses whenever their duties allow, volunteering for military training and skill courses that are available also helps. Everything Soldiers do to show their enthusiasm to excel and improve their value and abilities counts for each promotion.

NCOs should strive to be the very best in whatever position they are assigned. They will receive an NCOER for each position they hold and every report can affect competitiveness.

The quality of our Army's NCO Corps is extremely high and competition is tough. Unfortunately, everyone that a promotion board finds fully qualified cannot be promoted. The Army can only select and promote the number of NCOs that it needs by MOS, therefore, selection boards are charged with picking the "best qualified" and this is not an easy task. Each board leaves thousands of very qualified NCOs unselected based on the needs of the Army.

NCOs need to review their Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) regularly. That has been made easy with the advent of OMPF Online. OMPF Online is available to all Soldiers with AKO account and passwords via <https://www.hrc.army.mil> and click on HRC Indianapolis. How to review and update the OMPF is provided at the Web site. NCOs should review their files carefully to ensure that all NCOERs, Academic Evaluation

Reports, award certificates and other authorized documents are properly posted. Missing documents should be sent in to update the OMPF.

As mentioned, many great NCOs are not promoted each year because of the needs of the Army. NCOs who are not selected for promotion should do a couple of things. First, they should make an appointment with their command sergeant major or sergeant major and ask him or her to review their records with them. NCOs should not just ask why they didn't get promoted, they should ask them to point out the strengths and weaknesses in the file and for their opinion on how well their NCOERs have been written over time.

When an NCO has a good file (and most do) and they just ask "Why didn't I get promoted?" The typical answer is "You have a good file and I think you should have been promoted, I don't know why not." No matter how good

NCOs' OMPFs portrays them, they should ask what else they can do to make themselves more competitive. Something shined brighter in the records of those who were selected. Think about what you have done in the areas mentioned above and strive to improve anything, whether it is education or a tough assignment, to make yourself as competitive as possible. NCOs can also write to their career branches at HRC Alexandria. Again, they shouldn't just ask why they didn't get promoted. They should request an analysis of their records in comparison to their peers that have been selected for promotion and ask them for suggestions that may help make them more competitive. Areas to ask for comparisons in are assignments, duty positions, awards, military and civilian schools, special skills and any other areas that they can think of to compare.

Again, the authorized strength of the Army does not allow boards to select every NCO that is considered "fully qualified" for promotion or selection. Based on Army needs, selection boards can only select those NCOs who are found to be the "best qualified."

Editor's note: Sgt. Maj. Deborah Seimer, EREC sergeant major, HRC, Indianapolis, updated this article from the Summer 2002 issue of the NCO Journal.

